



The 2018 Israeli Foreign Policy Index *Key Findings of the Mitvim Institute Poll*

The sixth annual public opinion poll of the Mitvim Institute on Israel's foreign policy was conducted in September 2018. It was carried out by the Rafi Smith Institute and in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, among a representative sample of Israel's adult population (700 men and women, Jews and Arabs) and with a margin of error of 3.5%. This report presents the poll's key findings, grouped under four categories: Israel's foreign relations, Israel's Foreign Service, Israel and its surrounding regions, and Israel and the Palestinians.

A. Israel's Foreign Relations

- Israelis rank their country's **global standing** at 5.82 out of 10. This ranking has been improving every year since 2015.
- Israelis are split regarding their country's **top foreign policy priorities**. Improving relations with Arab states and advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process are ranked first, followed by countering boycotts of Israel and advancing ties with Russia.
- Israelis rank the state of **Israel-US relations** at 7.75 out of 10. 63% describe the relations as good (compared to 41% in 2017). This ranking has been improving every year since 2015.
- Israelis see Russia as **the most important country** for Israel besides the US, followed by Germany, Great Britain, China, France, and Egypt.
- For 54% of Israelis, it is very or rather significant for additional countries to relocate their **embassies in Israel to Jerusalem**. 37% think it is not or not very significant.
- 41% of Israelis think that the **Nation State Law** will have a negative impact on Israel's foreign relations. 12% think it will have a positive impact.
- Israelis are split on whether Israel should prioritize building **ties with democratic countries** (40%) or should not consider regime type as a factor (42%).

B. Israel's Foreign Service

- Israelis rank their **government's handling of foreign policy** at 5.22 out of 10. This ranking has been improving every year since 2015.
- Israelis rank the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) fulfillment of its mission** at 5.01 out of 10. This ranking has been improving every year since 2015.
- 58% of Israelis think that the **lack of a full-time foreign minister** has a negative impact on Israel foreign relations. 5% think it has a positive impact.
- 42% of Israelis have no opinion on who should serve as **Israel's foreign minister**. For those who did have an opinion, the leading candidates are Yair Lapid or Benjamin Netanyahu (10% each).
- 47% of Israelis think that Israel should take into account, to a moderate or large extent, the impact of its policy decisions on **Diaspora Jews**. 38% think this should be taken into account to a limited extent, or none at all.
- 55% of Israelis think that the Israeli MFA should be the responsible entity to counter the **BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement**, rather than a special ministry (21%) as is the case today.

- 46% of Israelis think that **entry to Israel** should be permitted to anyone not posing a security threat. 41% think that entry should be denied to those calling to boycott both Israel and the settlements, and 4% think that entry should be denied to those calling to boycott settlements only.

C. Israel and its Surrounding Regions

- The Israeli public is divided as to whether **Israel belongs** more to the Middle East (28%), Europe (23%), or the Mediterranean Basin (22%).
- A vast majority of Israelis (69%) think that **regional cooperation** between Israel and Middle Eastern countries is possible. 19% think it is not.
- 41% of Israelis would not like to **visit any Arab country**, even given normal ties between Israel and its neighbors. The United Arab Emirates (13%) and Egypt (12%) are the countries that Israelis would like to visit the most.
- Egypt (24%) and Saudi Arabia (23%) are the Arab countries with which Israelis see the **most importance in cooperating**. 28% think that Israel should not try to develop cooperation with any Arab country.
- A majority of Israelis think that **the EU** is currently more of a foe to Israel (55%) than a friend (18%).
- 70% of Israelis think that Great Britain, France and Germany compose the most important **group of EU member states** with which Israel should develop closer ties.
- The Israeli public is split on whether Israel should try to improve its **relations with Turkey** (42%) or not (45%).

D. Israel and the Palestinians

- 49% of Israelis think that a breakthrough in ties between **Israel and Arab states** can be reached even without progress in the **Israeli-Palestinian peace process**. 33% think that such a breakthrough is dependent on progress in the peace process.
- Most Israelis want Israel to launch **negotiations with the Palestinian Authority** towards a peace deal (50% vs. 36%), but do not want (32% vs. 51%) Israel to hold **negotiations with Hamas** towards a long-term ceasefire in Gaza.
- More Israelis think that the **continued Palestinian split** between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip serves Israel better (38%) than a reunification between them (27%).
- More respondents want Israel to improve **living conditions in the Gaza Strip** (43%) than to increase economic pressure on Gaza (38%).
- 21% of Israelis think that the **policy of US President Donald Trump** advances Israeli-Palestinian peace. 29% think it is distancing peace, and 30% think it does not impact chances for peace.

Trends over Time

Average rankings on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Israel's global standing	5.82	5.49	5.01	3.96	5.12
The government's performance on foreign policy	5.22	5.05	4.55	4.00	5.29
The MFA's fulfillment of its mission	5.01	4.81	4.31	4.03	4.80
The current state of Israel-US relations	7.75	6.88	5.56	5.01	6.09